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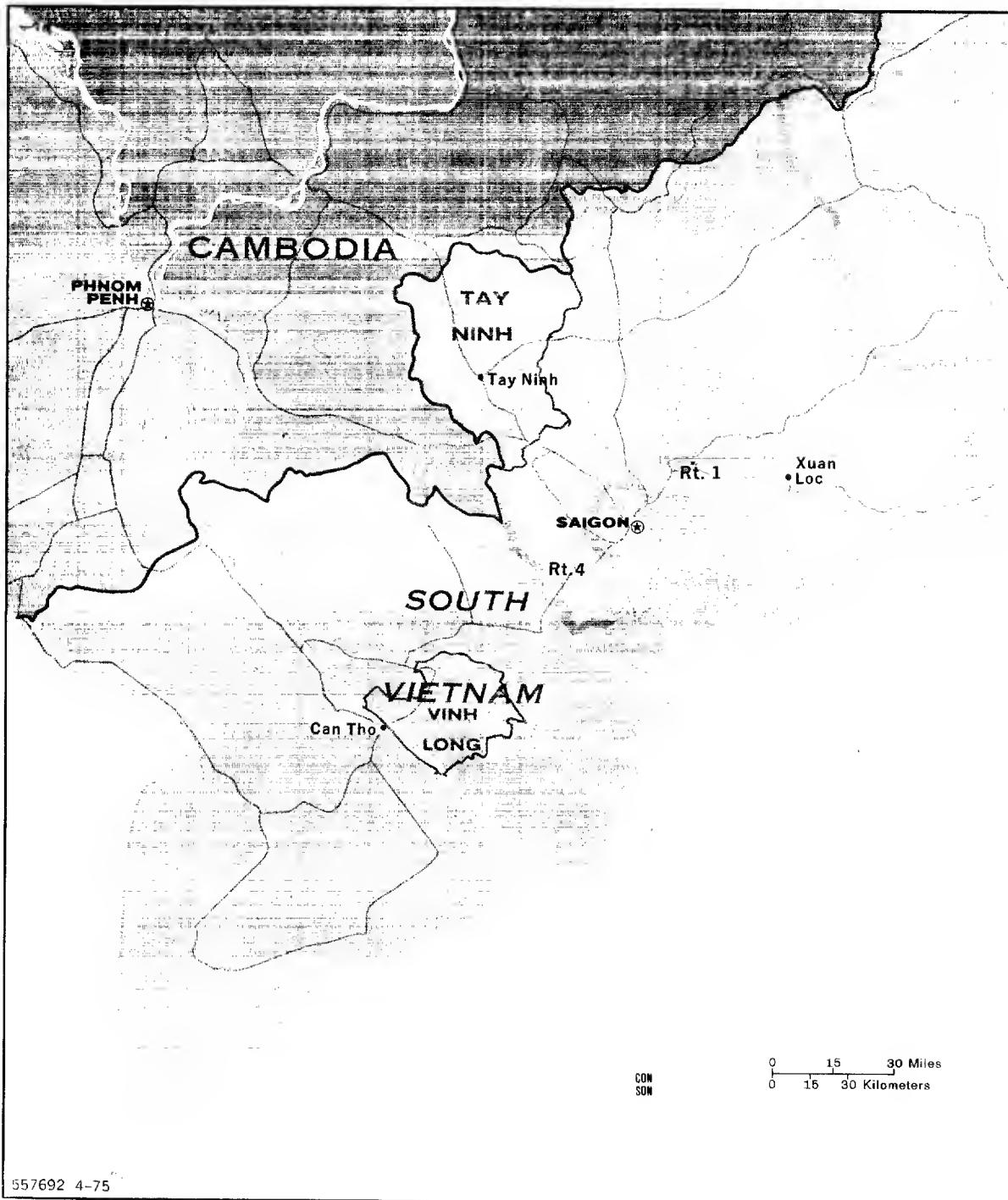
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SOUTH VIETNAM

The South Vietnamese still hold Xuan Loc, and the strong defenses around Can Tho appear to be forcing the North Vietnamese to pull back in some disorder.

The communists continue to hit Xuan Loc with artillery fire, but they have been beaten back on the ground. The 1st Airborne Brigade has been clearing the southern approaches to the city with the help of artillery, and a regiment from the South Vietnamese 5th Division has joined forces clearing the roads west of Xuan Loc. One government battalion has been cut off, however, and a government rescue force is attempting to reach the isolated unit.

Nearer Saigon, communist gunners last night and early this morning shelled Bien Hoa airbase with 23 rounds of 130-mm. artillery. No casualties from the barrage were reported, but two of the airfield's runways were damaged and temporarily closed. Additional shelling was reported, against the base's POL depot, and communist sappers blew up a bomb storage area. Preliminary casualty figures from the sapper attack indicate that 29 South Vietnamese were wounded.

In the delta in recent days, government units have driven attacking communist forces back from positions threatening populated areas and major highways. Officials there think that the North Vietnamese 4th Division's threat to Can Tho City has been substantially reduced.

[REDACTED] In some cases, the withdrawing units have left behind much of their equipment, ammunition, and food; some units reportedly broke and ran.

In addition to reopening Route 4 just north of Can Tho, seven South Vietnamese infantry and armored battalions have moved into communist-held areas of Vinh Long Province, driving enemy forces away from some of the artillery positions used to shell Can Tho.

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Strong communist artillery attacks and the appearance of tanks just north of Phan Rang suggest the communists are getting ready to launch a frontal attack there soon.

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The communists fired some 50 rocket and artillery rounds into Tay Ninh City yesterday, damaging a hospital and destroying an ammunition dump. Only one regiment of the South Vietnamese 25th Division remains in the city--the remainder has been deployed south to protect the roads linking Tay Ninh with Saigon. The communists currently have enough manpower left in northern Tay Ninh Province to challenge the city's defenses, especially since Saigon has shifted its armored units to the Xuan Loc battlefield.

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### CAMBODIA

The Khmer communists are pressing closer to Phnom Penh from the northwest and have launched major attacks southeast of the capital, apparently in a final bid to force the capitulation of the government.

Heavy fighting west and northwest of the capital is reportedly forcing large numbers of refugees and some government troops to flee into the city. Communist forces have advanced to positions between Phnom Penh and Pochehtong airfield and may be infiltrating into the capital under cover of the heavy flow of refugees.

According to press reports, a civilian aircraft attempting to land at Pochehtong late yesterday found the airfield and the control tower deserted.

The Khmer communists have also launched major attacks southeast of the capital. Heavy fighting was reported along Route 1 and the Bassac River on April 14, with government defenses reportedly holding.

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### EGYPT

The appointment last night of Mamduh Salim as Egypt's new prime minister is part of President Sadat's effort to reassure the public that suspension of peace negotiations will not mean a let-up in his program of economic development. Discontent over economic issues has accompanied past periods of stagnation on the Arab-Israeli diplomatic front, and Sadat is doing what he can to prevent it this time.

Salim replaces Abd al-Aziz Hijazi, a principal target of growing criticism over economic issues. Salim himself is no better equipped to cope with the country's economic ills than was Hijazi. Sadat and Salim are expected to seek a more efficient team of economic experts for the cabinet, hoping the new men will be able somehow to cut through the bureaucratic ineptitude that has obstructed Sadat's development programs.

As minister of interior since 1971 Salim headed Egypt's security apparatus. His elevation to prime minister will be taken as another signal to malcontents that public disturbances will not be tolerated.

Salim is a loyal partisan of Sadat and shows no personal political ambitions. He is no innovator, and Sadat himself will continue to make and guide policy.

The new cabinet is likely to be announced today. The US embassy in Cairo thinks Foreign Minister Fahmi and Defense Minister Gamassy will retain their posts and may be made deputy prime ministers as well.

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### ISRAEL

The Israelis may have begun series production of their "super Mirage" fighter aircraft.

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Yesterday, the aircraft was shown to the public for the first time.

The aircraft, which the Israelis call "Lion Cub," has been under development for about five years, and the first prototype flew in mid-1973.

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The "Lion Cub" is based upon a modified Mirage 5 airframe and is powered by a single US J-79 engine--the engine used in the F-4 Phantom. The J-79 offers improved performance and greater reliability than the Atar engine used in the French-built Mirage III and Mirage 5 aircraft. The "Lion Cub," which can fly at twice the speed of sound, reportedly will have both an interceptor and ground-attack role and is said to have a payload of some 10,000 pounds--nearly twice that of the Mirage 5.

Components for the aircraft are being manufactured and assembled in Israel, including the J-79 engine, which is being built under license from the US. The production rate was originally set at about two aircraft per month, but this rate may not be possible in view of the other demands on the Israeli aircraft industry. As many as 200 of the aircraft ultimately may be produced, but only some 60 to 100 are expected to go to the Israeli air force. The Israelis may hope to find a market for the remainder, but are likely to encounter strong competition from the French, among others. Israeli Defense Minister Peres said yesterday that each aircraft will cost about \$4 million.

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### PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN

Poor Pakistani-Afghan relations have grown even worse over the past two months, but neither side appears likely to let the situation degenerate into outright hostilities.

Relations began to deteriorate in mid-1973, when Mohammad Daoud seized power in Afghanistan and revived a long-standing border dispute with Pakistan. The Daoud regime has since maintained a steady stream of anti-Pakistani propaganda, and Islamabad has reciprocated in kind.

Daoud is probably more reluctant than Pakistan's Prime Minister Bhutto to ease the war of words. To do so, in Daoud's view, could amount to acceptance of the status quo--Pakistani sovereignty in the disputed border region.

The antagonism between the two governments went up a notch in February when the Pakistanis, despite a lack of hard evidence, accused the Afghans of complicity in the assassination of Bhutto's chief political lieutenant in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, located in the disputed border region. Relations may have been further strained in late February by a US policy reversal permitting the resumption of arms sales to Pakistan.

In recent weeks, the landlocked Afghans have alleged that Pakistan is restricting their access to Pakistani port and rail facilities. Islamabad denies it is discriminating against the Afghans, claiming that Pakistan itself is suffering from the limitations of these facilities.

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Daoud will probably try to keep his troubles with Pakistan from getting out of hand. He knows that Pakistan's army is much stronger than his own, and that Afghanistan could not count on being rescued by its Soviet or Indian friends in the event of a war with Pakistan, although they would at least provide diplomatic support. Moscow and New Delhi have counseled Daoud in the past to avoid open conflict with Pakistan.

Bhutto, for his part, knows hostilities with Afghanistan would be expensive and could interrupt his consolidation of power at home. Such hostilities could also disrupt the process of reconciliation between Pakistan and India that Bhutto has endorsed.

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JAPAN

In the local elections on Sunday, Prime Minister Miki's ruling Liberal Democrats retained 13 of 15 prefectural governorships and also scored well in mayoral and local assembly contests. Oppositionist incumbent governors were reelected in Tokyo and Osaka--Japan's two largest prefectures.

In light of strong public dissatisfaction over the rate of inflation and other problems besetting his party, Miki can justifiably argue that his clean image and active campaigning helped avoid a major electoral setback. Other party leaders aspiring to the prime ministership in the near future will be hard pressed to claim otherwise.

A stronger Liberal Democratic showing would have provided Miki with sufficient justification to call for an early national election, as is traditional for a new prime minister. Miki may still decide to do so, but he would probably have to bargain with powerful party leaders opposed to the idea. Rather than make the concessions this would entail, Miki may delay the election and hope to capitalize on the anticipated economic recovery and the benefits of his and the Emperor's visits to the US later this year.

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### LEBANON

Lebanese security forces are attempting to restore order in Beirut where radical fedayeen elements and the militia of the conservative Phalanges Party have been engaging in armed clashes since Sunday. The Lebanese army and the major fedayeen groups have so far not become heavily involved in the fighting, which has left several dozen dead or wounded.

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The unrest began with an altercation between a Palestinian and a policeman at a roadblock erected by Phalangist forces. Armed fedayeen came to the area, killed three members of the militia, and fled. The militia, in turn, later killed 26 Palestinians by opening fire on a bus that entered the area, apparently by chance.

The present dispute comes at a particularly bad time for the government of Prime Minister Sulh, which is still attempting to defend itself for its handling of last month's disturbances in the southern port city of Sidon. Sulh, who has been in office for six months, had scheduled a vote of confidence in parliament for today.

The current unrest almost certainly will delay the vote, and could even prompt Sulh to resign. Socialist leader Kamal Jumblatt, who has provided important support for the Prime Minister, has already called for the expulsion or resignation of the two Phalangist ministers in the cabinet. Such a development would seriously alter the cabinet's confessional and political balance, which is already distorted as a result of the resignations that followed last month's incident.

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Militants of the large Phalanges Party, a strongly nationalist Christian group, and the fedayeen have clashed a number of times since 1969, when they had a large-scale set-to. The Phalangists advocate strict Lebanese control of the Palestinian refugee camps and are ever ready to use their militia of several thousand men to protect their own interests, which they consider ultimately require preservation of Christian control of Lebanon's government. In 1969 and in 1970, fighting between the two groups became serious enough to draw in the Lebanese army.

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